

Our experience as organizers in Newark has shown us the need for more information. Some of us do our own research, sometimes we have a person who does work for us in one specific area, but we could use more. Occasionally we even duplicate one another's work. At times, we need work done on a common project, but none of the participants has the time to spend on it because, as it should be, our own local work comes first.

Furthermore, we have no opportunity to have broad long-range research done, research that we don't necessarily need done for a specific purpose, but that which might help us both in deciding on and carrying out future work.

We usually are rushed for time and don't try to train other less involved community people to do the research themselves. Likewise, we don't know how to do some of it.

We would like to start a community controlled research institute that would also perform other useful functions including:

training

classes on local economic issues

resource center

seminars at community centers

layout and typesetting space for community newsletters and newspapers

printing facilities

video equipment

RESEARCH

We think that control should be in the hands of a board of trustees made up of people in the area doing community or workplace organizing.

The board would decide on long term projects, who would have access to the institute, fundraising, evaluation and selection of staff. People who wanted the institute to do work for them would have to have at least one sponsor from the board. The staff would carry out the decisions of the board.

STAFF

We would like to see 3 or 5 full and/or part-time staff. The staff would do some of the research themselves, but would also locate and train (if Necessary) volunteer students, college teachers and other professionals.

Our guess is that there are many people in colleges who realize that the work they are doing is irrelevant to the vital issues of the day and who feel that they want to do "something" but don't know what to do or how to get in touch with people who do. These people are a valuable resource to organizing but are presently wasted. We think that a limited but still significant number would become active in community initiated research work. The board would have to decide the proportion of staff time to be spent on working with volunteer

researchers. A danger is that needed work wouldn't be done quickly enough. The board can evaluate the process.

In any event the staff would have to be responsible for the analysis and presentation of the information contributed by the volunteer researchers. The staff would try to present alternative analyses, where possible, and involve community people in coming up with the most logical way of interpreting the information. The staff would also be responsible for the day to day organization and evaluation of the individuals involved.

TRAINING

We would see the training of community people to do research as a primary objective. The staff would be responsible and most likely do most of this. Hopefully, some of the volunteers would be sensitive enough to also do a part of this.

We can see this happening in 2 ways:

1 one-to-one where a researcher takes a community person with him/her and they work together on a piece of a project.

2 in small classes around very specific topics where the number of steps involved is relatively small.

These ideas are not really developed, nevertheless, we see this part of the project as key.

RESOURCE CENTER

A resource center would be developed. It would include books, subscriptions to magazines, newsletters, newspapers journals etc., and bibliographies.

It would also include files on past and ongoing research, materials from other places on organizing strategies and a contact list of people with needed skills or knowledge on relevant topics (utilities, women's issues, affirmative action, workplace and community organizing etc.) The staff would also be responsible for setting up ways to have this resource center really be useful to the groups involved. Often resource centers go totally untouched because of the irrelevance of the material or the lack of ways for people to use them.

CLASSES

The staff would be responsible for organizing and/or teaching classes on subjects decided by the board. Possibilities include:

Economy of Newark

Runaway shops, taxes and jobs

The economics of health

Impact of redevelopment

Housing for working and poor people

Tenant's rights

Discrimination: Ways to fight back

We also see a series of seminars on "KNOW YOUR RIGHTS" to be held in the different neighborhoods of the city. These would be short term(1 or 2 sessions) very basic and relating to more immediate concerns.

PRINTING

One of the problems, today, is the lack of access to monopoly controlled media by community groups who therefore have to rely on their own means of communication: leaflets, community newsletters etc.

We would like the institute to aid this process in the following ways.

- 1 providing a well equiped lay-out room
- 2 having equipment like electrostenciling machine and possibly typesetting equipment and an offset press. (It may even be possible to train people in all aspects of printing.)

We can see courses done in layout so people develop both design and technical skills. Workshops in writing, editing, headlining and fundraising through ads.

A goal would be a series of community newspapers(financially solvent, community controled) throughout the city.

Articles from one group could be shared with others. A stock of cataloged graphics could be accumulated to make the newspapers more attractive.

CONCLUSION

We will be distributing this paper. We want criticisms and new ideas.

We also want to know who's interested in being a part of the institute (on the board, volunteer, staff.) Please let us know. We understand that not everyone who likes this idea can work on making it a reality, but we are looking for those who would be interested in working on it now.

We must develop a proposal for funding and would like broad representation in this part of the project.